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JULY 2020 | VOLUME 12 | ISSUE 7

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George Floyd's horrific death and police brutality: demands for racial equality and justice. **Page 10**



MEET YOUR
VENDOR: **MATT
WHITE, PAGE 3**



GROUNDCOVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.



Photo credit: Evan Parness

Vendor responses to police brutality

GROUNDCOVER COMMUNITY

Violent, unjust encounters with police are nothing new for Black people in America, and these injustices can be compounded by homelessness. We sat down and talked with some of our Groundcover vendors to hear their experiences with racial injustice, homelessness, and the police.

La Shawn — Envisioning the future of public safety

The murder of George does not surprise me at all. I myself have been a victim of the brutality and mistreatment of bad people who are and/or have been employed as police officers.

I would like to see the day when individuals who apply to become law enforcement agents are required by law to undergo a more thorough mental health evaluation over a two-year period, as well as complete the National Alliance of Mental Illness classes. This process should also require that prospective officers receive education from licensed psychiatrists to educate these individuals about the numerous symptoms that are preexistent, those that are triggered in people who have a mental illness diagnosis, and symptoms in people who are not aware or capable of seeking treatment. I do understand that it is a dangerous task for the police, too, when they cannot tell what the risks are, if any, when responding to an incident.

In my mind there are just simply people who choose to do the wrong thing by abusing authority. Overall, I'd like to see times where we as a whole demonstrate respect for humanity. Last but not least, be more open-minded to things that we may not have a full understanding of and be willing to take a deeper look at another's point of view

Matt — How it happened to me

I was on my way home from selling

Groundcover, on the edge of State St. I had my papers in my hand and a small knife nestled among them because I had gotten in some fights with some haters earlier that day and the night before. A student came out of the Union and followed right behind me. I turned and asked him, "Hey, you want to buy a Groundcover News or buy me a beer?"

He said no so I continued down the street. When I got to Dominos, seven cops told me. "Put up your hands."

I did. Then they asked, "You got a knife?"

I said "Yes," and gave it to them. I asked what I did wrong.

They locked me up for attempted robbery. In court, the student said I held a knife to his throat. My public defender asked him a series of questions based on my account and the guy admitted that I didn't ask him for money as part of a robbery. As soon as he was dismissed from the witness stand, he ran out of the courtroom for good.

But I was still charged with armed robbery because of the knife. The prosecutor gave me a choice of facing a possible conviction and five years in prison or accepting a plea deal of 18 months of probation in exchange for a guilty plea to felony attempted robbery. I took the deal but violated probation by drinking alcohol. I was in and out of treatment programs and jail for the next year, consequently losing my apartment.

Joe — My experiences

The police had me in handcuffs at the mall; they profiled me as a drug dealer. They came up to me and immediately put me in handcuffs. I asked them, "Why am I in cuffs?" and they wouldn't tell me. They just kept on saying, "Where the drugs at, where the drugs at?" I didn't have any drugs. I was chained for 12-15 minutes. The police ain't nothing but a big ole gang. We talk about gangs, but the police are the biggest organized gang out here. The

whole judicial system is.

I wish people stopped the stupid hatred. I guess this is what we need to go through to get the love and the peace. Something tragic has to happen to get the good out. It's kinda messed up. You gotta hit rock bottom to get back up.

Quincy — Police and homelessness

The police should protect and serve, but they go out of their bounds and overdo it sometimes. If I do have police contact, I have to have total respect for the police, because if I don't, they'll screw me up. You never know. Let's say I called the police. Everything is reversed on me. First I'm the plaintiff, and all of a sudden I become the defendant. They try to beat me down. "Wait, I called you guys, why are you trying to beat on me?" When you resist, they use force. When they use force, they abuse their authority. They were holding George Floyd down by his neck. Regardless, they were gonna kill him. He's choking, let him up.

If I'm getting hurt, there's not much they can do to help. If I'm getting jumped, they won't get there in time. The police might be overrated.

Conclusion

When asked to define justice, Quincy replied, "Justice means free, it means honor, it means cherishing a moment of peace within yourself, within the next being around you. Justice is essential, it's being found not guilty. I could look at that word in many different perspectives. It means you won your battle." The end to police brutality—the fight for justice—is proving to be a long, hard-fought battle. We must continue to center the voices of those who are most oppressed in this country when imagining a future without police.

Our Statement of Solidarity with the Black Lives Matter Movement

From its inception, **Groundcover News** has approached all its activities with belief in the following principles, as written on our website:

- All people have the right to dignity.
- Diversity has intrinsic value.
- Poverty is political—systemic change is necessary.
- Building community is essential to social change.
- Political effectiveness requires staying power.
- Solutions to poverty must involve people who are directly affected.
- Risks are necessary to create positive change.
- Meeting people where they are honors their skills and potential.
- We are committed to quality, professionalism, and accountability in everything we do.

We feel our attachment to these principles even more strongly today. If they resonate with you too, and you are looking for a way to make a difference during these life-changing times, please join us as a volunteer, supporter, friend or Board Member. Email contact@groundcovernews.com to let us know.



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Joe Woods

GROUNDCOVER

Mission

Creating opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.

Susan Beckett — publisher

Michael Corrigan — assistant director

Andrew Nixon — editor

Lindsay Calka — layout editor

MEET YOUR VENDOR



Matt White, vendor No. 324

In one sentence, who are you?

I am a black man with hopes and dreams.

Where do you normally sell Groundcover?

All over Ann Arbor.

When and why did you start selling Groundcover?

I started in 2017 because it was an honest way to make more money and to be among the community.

What's your favorite thing about selling Groundcover?

Selling to new customers; meeting new people.

What is something our readers should know about you?

I like to enjoy life, most definitely the sunshine. I use the day as it comes.

What's the most interesting thing that ever happened to you while selling Groundcover?

I met good people that lasted for a lifetime. Good friends!

What change would you like to see in Washtenaw County?

I'd like to see people stop judging others and succumbing to bias before they even know the person. And I'd like to see less policing of Blacks and an end to long sentences for small crimes. Washtenaw County is pretty good but in places like Detroit, we need more help for Blacks, especially in low-income school districts.

Is there anything else you'd like folks to know about you?

I'm Christian and I believe Jesus Christ died for my sins and I leave it in his hands. I try my best but I do make mistakes. But I try to do the right thing, keep my conscience clean, so I can sleep at night.

Public people

JIM CLARK Groundcover vendor No. 139

During my time experiencing homelessness, I noticed something about everyday life on the street. I found myself spending a lot of time at the library, bus stations, on the expanse of U-M's campus and in parks. When I could afford to, I would go to restaurants or see a movie. There were places to be. Just not all the time, not all at once. Being homeless means living in public.

I remember thinking "I don't have a kitchen, so I would go to the shelter, or the churches or a restaurant. But I'm not allowed to live there. I don't have a living room, but there is a library, and movie theaters and the park in the summer, but I can't fall asleep on the couch in the library. I don't have a bedroom, so the county (public) helps by placing me in the shelter or giving me a tent and sleeping bag for camping in a public park. I don't have a basement or garage, so all I own I have to carry with me. Everywhere. I couldn't wait to get a place to stay so I didn't have to carry that backpack everywhere! There was storage at the shelter. I kept my important papers there, surplus clothing and medical supplies. All these things had to fit into two trash bags. I had no filing cabinet, closet or medicine cabinet. No storage.

Going to the bathroom was a huge challenge as a public person. I want to follow the law, do the right thing when nature calls and find a toilet. Unfortunately, unless it's marked as public, every bathroom is private. With a few exceptions for the food service industry, no business has to let you

use their bathroom. I tried not using any bathroom not designated as public. I found them in the usual places – library, city hall, parks, the bus station. I did not include churches or places generally considered public like malls or campuses. It was impossible. Without a car, I spent most of my time walking to a bathroom, or not walking too far from the shelter which has a public restroom, in case I needed the bathroom.

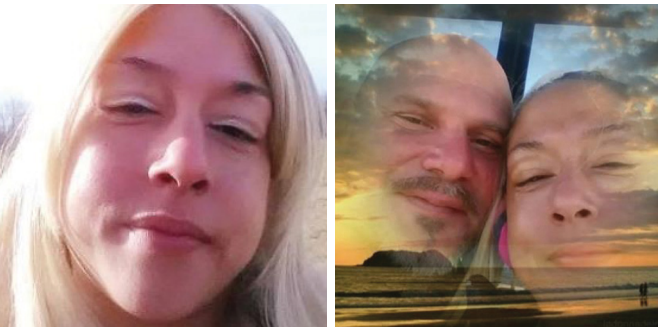
Along with waste elimination is hygiene. It is very difficult to keep clean as a public person. The shelter and a few charitable organizations (Peace House, Mercy House, and Journey of Faith) were the only places to shower and do laundry. I could afford Planet Fitness at one time, and the 24-hour laundry places are good for taking an extra long time doing one load of laundry. But you can't take a long hot bath at Planet Fitness, and the clerk at the laundromat will kick you out for sleeping without laundry.

Perhaps the worst thing about being a public person is the lack of privacy. There is no place to just hang out in your underwear (or naked for that matter), or plop on a couch in front of some distraction for hours at a time. No place to drink a beer!

On a serious note, I did not feel safe anywhere when it came to resting. I felt like I didn't belong anywhere, I had nowhere to go to be a private person. I couldn't let my guard down. There was never a public place where it was okay to relax and feel like everything is okay and tomorrow will take care of itself.

In memory of Tasha

Tasha Mills, age 40, passed away in June after a battle with cancer. Tasha was born and raised in Ann Arbor, Michigan where she earned the title of Life of the Party through her beaming personality and pursuit of fun. Although not religious Tasha knew the power of prayer. She enjoyed the Michigan summers in downtown Ann Arbor surrounded by friends and family. In her younger years Tasha was tasked with helping raise her younger sisters whom she loved with all her heart. Later in life her sister would come to her aid and take care of her. Her mother Renee Mills preceded her in death, (2002). She leaves her father David Mills, two sisters Renee' and Keena Mills, a child, Tiara Mills and a grandson, Luke Mills. She also leaves her very much loved nieces and nephews, a host of aunts and uncles and faithful friends, including Glenn Page, Groundcover vendor No. 407, and Joe Woods, Groundcover vendor No. 103.



Tasha was preceded in death by her devoted companion Casimir Lugo.

Boober update

KEVIN SPANGLER Groundcover vendor No. 307

Summer is here and everyone is out enjoying life. I have been praying for years for the city center to be closed; I didn't realize how soon it would happen. The energy is great in town. We at Boober are having constant rides.

Great things are on the horizon! I set a goal in December 2016 to create a billion-dollar business. I am 5 weeks away from the completion of a rideshare app called Go Boober. Right around that time Ariel and I will be releasing our book "Rising Out of Depression and Going Up the Royal Road."

Our new tagline is: Go Boober — it's the best!



Why now and how far will we go?

Is this a watershed moment when race-related wrongs will actually be righted? White people are galvanized by the Black Lives Matter movement now as they've rarely been before, with 70% of Americans agreeing with protesters that change is needed. Has our shared experience and cooperation combatting coronavirus fostered a sense of camaraderie? Has a recognition of our interdependence heightened our empathetic responses to the horrific video of George Floyd's murder? I think so.

And we are much less distracted these days. Sports and entertainment have long been used to pacify and marginalize the masses. Today, many people are mostly at home and paying attention to the news. They have pent-up energy and are ready to use it.

This makes it an ideal time to restore and reshape our democracy.

A year ago, the Academy of Arts and Sciences embarked on a quest to re-invent democracy in America for the 21st century. They started with a listening tour. The commission found tremendous civic pride and involvement in local community affairs. Contrast that with the alienation they discovered regarding national politics. People do not feel we have a common purpose. People are frustrated, concerned and yearning for national pride.

Still, people across the political spectrum recognize the importance of the rights and responsibilities of citizens. They feel a responsibility to the community and value empowerment of individuals. But many people question whether government as we know it is worth participating in.

New York Times columnist David Brooks was part of the Academy's Commission on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship. It was tasked with listening to citizens and recommending a path forward to address the schism between the people of the United States and their government. In Brooks's section of the final report presentation, he quoted historian Samuel Huntington, who wrote, "America proceeds by moral convulsions. Every 60 years we decide that America is not living up to its promise and we have a moment of passionate intensity." According to Huntington,



SUSAN BECKETT
Publisher

we had such moments in the 1770s, 1830s, 1890s and 1960s. In 1981, he predicted one around 2020.

Brooks postulated that the cohesion developed in addressing COVID-19 (even Congress quickly worked together and passed bi-lateral legislation) continued in the response to the police killings of black people. Surveys of the public found that two-thirds of Americans were more disturbed by police violence than by violent protestors.

The Commission developed six strategies and 31 recommendations. Among them, Truth and Reconciliation – how we tell the story of America – is particularly timely. Black leaders are calling for a national story that acknowledges the wealth built for others with free labor from enslaved people and the repeated campaigns to keep them impoverished and available as cheap labor. They call for a future that redresses the poverty and disintegration fostered by those policies. Putting money into creating healthy communities is one facet of the calls to defund the police.

Karen Bass, Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, introduced the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2020. The thrust is to change police culture. The changes build on the Fraternal Order of Police request for assistance in establishing standards for police conduct. Bass is looking for a paradigm shift in policing, pivoting from holding people accountable to serving and protecting the public. In the killing of Rayshard Brooks, who fell asleep in the drive-through lane of an Atlanta Wendy's on June 12, Bass asserted that it should never have escalated to the point where he was tempted to resist arrest. He could have been allowed to walk to his sister's, as he suggested, or the police

could even have driven him there. He was inebriated but he hadn't hurt anyone and wasn't driving or belligerent when the police encountered him.

The Act creates law enforcement development and training programs, requiring accreditation standards and a national Police Misconduct Registry. It offers grants for innovative public safety approaches. (Interestingly, another Commission recommendation was creating the National Trust for Civil Infrastructure, charged with bringing people together across differences and divides.)

- The Act also:
- Bans religious and discriminatory profiling
 - Bans chokeholds, carotid holds and no-knock warrants at the federal level and limits transfer of military-grade equipment to local and state departments
 - Expands independent investigation authority for misconduct
 - Requires reporting of use-of-force data disaggregated by race, sex, disability, religion and age.

The Senate response to demands for change includes taking up a House bill to make lynching a federal hate crime and another bill to establish a National Criminal Justice Commission. The Senate also introduced its own bills to address police killings. The JUSTICE Act was introduced by the lone Black GOP senator Tim Scott.

- The JUSTICE Act:
- Mandates an enhanced use-of-force database to ensure that all police departments provide the Department of Justice with information on the use of force leading to serious bodily injury and death, and tracks no-knock warrants.
 - Funds new commissions to study law enforcement and race.
 - Addresses officer misconduct.
 - Provides funding for de-escalation training tactics and duty to intervene protocol to prevent excessive use of force.

Departments that do not restrict the use of chokeholds face the loss of federal funding. The JUSTICE Act is part of a Senate package of bills known as the Just and Unifying Solutions to Invigorate Communities Everywhere Act of 2020. The package extends



Karen Bass, Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, introduced the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2020.

funding streams for various federal law enforcement programs, including the Community Oriented Policing Services programs that provide grants important to state and local police departments. It includes a proposal to prohibit federal law enforcement officers from engaging in sexual conduct with those being arrested or in custody. Unlike the House bill, it isn't expected to challenge "qualified immunity," which broadly protects officers from civil lawsuits.

Enactment of the House or Senate packages and good-faith follow-through could lead to a law enforcement culture change, but the Senate bills fall short of a true paradigm shift.

A policeman from Iceland was interviewed on NPR about his country's success at eliminating COVID-19 when it first appeared in Iceland. Police there used their tracking expertise to do contact tracing. When asked if he thought using police to do contact tracing was a good strategy for other countries, he emphasized that, in Iceland, police are trusted and known for helping people. He did not think using police would be successful in the United States.

We have a long way to go and this is a moment for bold and far-reaching progress.

What needs to be done

KEN PARKS
Groundcover vendor No. 490

To Be comes first, To Do follows. Breathe in, breathe out. Feel the dignity of good posture. Inhale to every cell of your body, exhale to the stars. Breathe in to your heart, breathe out to the heart of the world. Experience whatever arises. Let it come and go. Imagine your heart and the heart of the world have no boundary. We are preparing for a grand adventure.

Visualize all those you love dearly. You share one heart as you breathe slowly. Visualize all those you care about. Inhale mindfully, exhale and empty your mind. Visualize and breathe until you sense all beings without exception including animals and enemies. If the awareness of suffering arises imagine that an activated heart can transform suffering to peace of mind. It becomes possible to smile and learn from your pain. Breathe suffering in, breathe out the cure, compassion and lovingkindness. Any kind of natural breath is practice for maturing, learning to be who we really are, to be and do as art, creating culture that heals and opens our common heart, learning to honor our most exalted ancestors.

I believe babies breathe naturally

mindfully until they are stressed by anxiety. I remember enough to get started on my healing. I had a wonderful session with Joya D'Cruz, a focusing trained therapist, who brought me to recognize my neglected inner child. Your precious human birth may get traumatized but awaits the healing of recognition and embrace. Awaken the dream of freedom. We have helpful studies and practices on brain development. Neuroplasticity means we can improve our health and wellbeing at any age. Dr.Gabor Mate, Dr. Resmaa Menakem, and Dr. Stephen Porges are some of the world's most wonderful research practitioners.

Goodness flows from a simple breath. I believe this is the core of health education and culture. It is not only a specialty for career professionals, it works best as a living practice. Advanced practitioners do dream yoga, transference of consciousness, or face the barrel of a drone fearlessly. We now know even drone operators have their own kind of grief and may come to redemptive confession and transformative justice.

Formal education has an important place. How else could we train police and military in mindfulness and non-violence? The state as we know it claims a monopoly on violence, even

glories in it. As is taught, "A journey of 1000 miles begins with a single step." We have many experienced teachers on the road to peace and justice. My favorite nonviolence training was with Reverend Lucius Walker Jr. and the Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba. We spent 3 days on the border by Laredo, Texas preparing to face the U.S. Border Patrol who did not want us to cross into Mexico with solidarity donations for Cuba. There were some 300 of us, many kinds of political and spiritual views united in revolutionary love. From gratitude, the Cubans offered scholarships to U.S. citizens at world-famous E.L.A.M., their medical school.

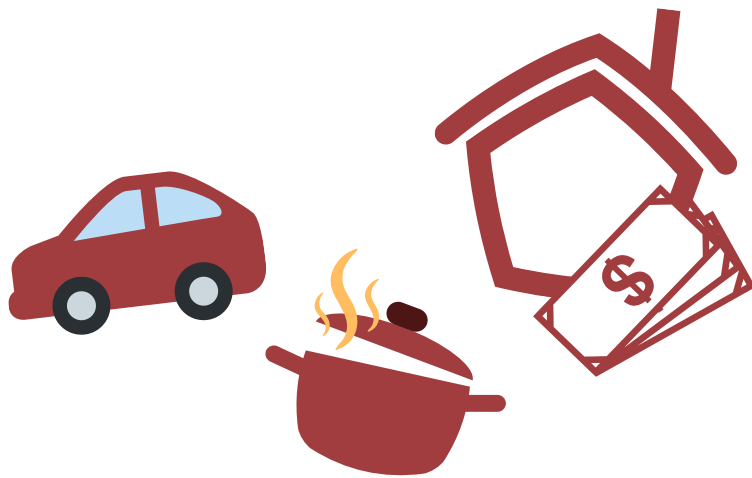
The possibilities before us are vast. It's important to broaden our view, to choose wisely and boldly. There is a time for stillness and action. The lion knows when to roar and when to rest at ease. This moment of pandemic, economic social political meltdown and race violence is a precious opportunity to study, reflect, decide and act on "What Needs To Be Done." Organizing to protect and practice the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will delight our ancestors and children to the 7th Generation. Discovering our indigenous heritage will help us become indigenous-centered and use the best of science, our heart/mind field, our interrelated nature with Mother Earth, to walk together on Freedom Road.

At home in our body, especially our truth body, we are empowered to celebrate life. Work with Black Lives Matter until all lives matter. End the confined animal farming operations that abuse animals. Do the inner healing that dismantles the three pillars of exploitation and oppression. You can say sex, race and class. Even better, listen to Martin Luther King Jr's "The Three Evils of Society" on YouTube. There was no white race until Bacon's Rebellion. Indigenous genocide was standard colonial practice. We can recycle that historical burden if we honor our human responsibility and do the work of redemptive love and reparations. Land sovereignty is the main point of reparations. The question becomes "How do we share the land in an indigenous-centered process?"

There is enough to do. If I do my part and you do your part we will meet in the common struggle that benefits life itself. Black Lives Matter and Standing Rock are the power of history now. Breathe Freedom.

Is COVID-19 making it hard to make ends meet?

If you're struggling to keep up with rent, mortgage, or utilities payments, or need help paying for food, childcare, or gas for your car the **Barrier Buster Network** is here to support you.



Visit **Washtenaw.org/2818** or contact one of these Barrier Busters agencies to help you pay your bills as soon as possible:

Housing Access for Washtenaw County
Phone: 734.961.1999
Website: housingaccess.net

SOS Community Services
Phone: 734.484.5411
Website: www.soscs.org

Washtenaw Health Plan
Phone: 734.544.3030
Website: www.washtenaw.org/WHP

Jewish Family Services
Phone: 734.769.0209
Website: jfsannarbor.org

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Art in the time of COVID-19

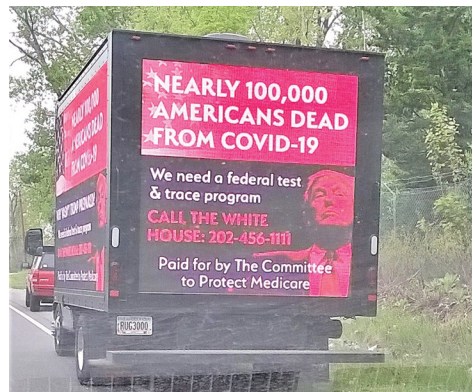
LAURIE WECHTER
Groundcover contributor

Welcome to the first Centerfold Art Spread in Groundcover News!

Over recent months, I have been searching out artists living under complicated and often grueling conditions, and asking them to express themselves on the subject of how they are using art to cope with the novel coronavirus. Invitees were housing-insecure and homeless artists, people struggling with addiction or mental illness and/or those trying to lift themselves out of poverty. Artists were invited to write a short statement about their piece(s) if they wanted to. The work is outstanding and the artists deserve admiration for their willingness to share a part of their inner life

with a wide audience.

Many thanks to Rose Marcum-Raugh, Curator, Art on a Journey Art Gallery/Studio at Journey of Faith Church, for her continued help with this project. Much appreciation also goes out to Summer Berman of Fresh Start Clubhouse, Becki Spangler of ArtBreak and Susan Beckett of Groundcover News. Observe and learn!

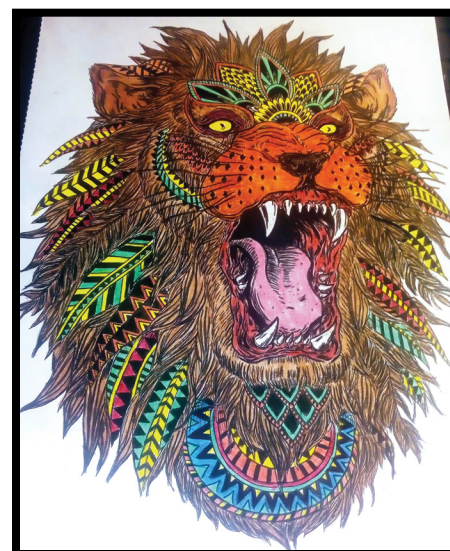


COVID19 by Ria Daugherty, Acrylic Paint on Canvas Board, Art on a Journey

The way that my art has helped is by curbing my depression.

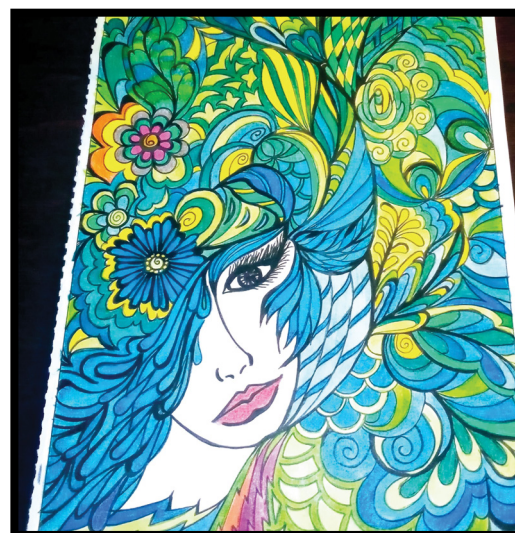


Space by Alice Fox, Acrylic Paint on Canvas Board, Art on a Journey Gallery/Studio



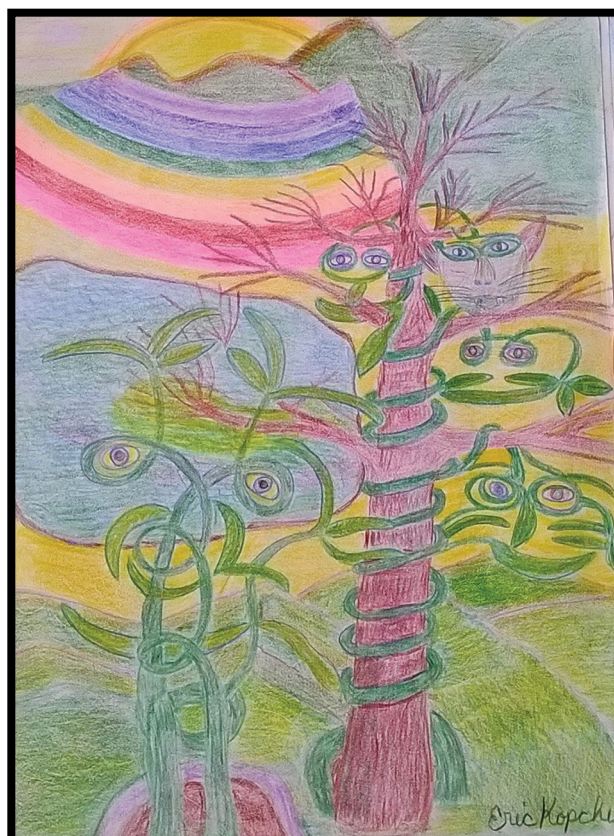
Finley by Tammy McCaslin, Coloring book and Colored Pencils, ArtBreak

This is Finley. He is the fair warrior. He represents my fight against my homelessness and my fight for my sobriety. That is me busting through all the barriers to get to where I want to be.



Chandra by Tammy McCaslin, Coloring Book and Colored Pencils

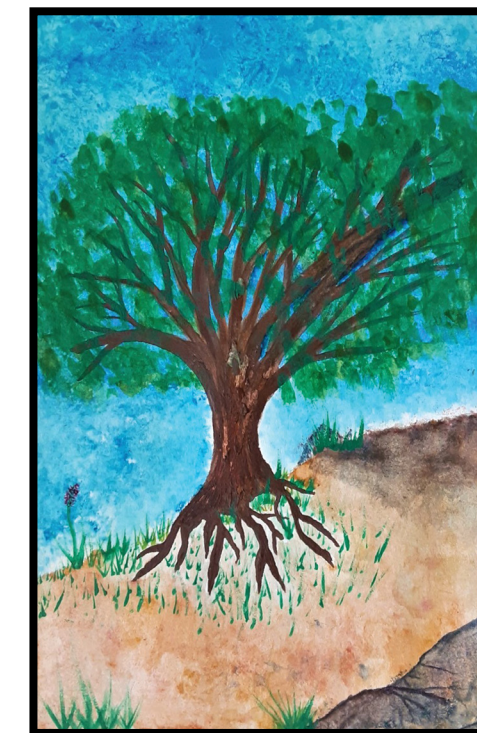
I enjoyed coloring her. She gave me the feeling of a breakthrough of all the obstacles that I have going on in my life. A feeling of hope.



The Natural World of Entanglement by Eric L. Kopchia, Colored Pencil on Paper, ArtBreak

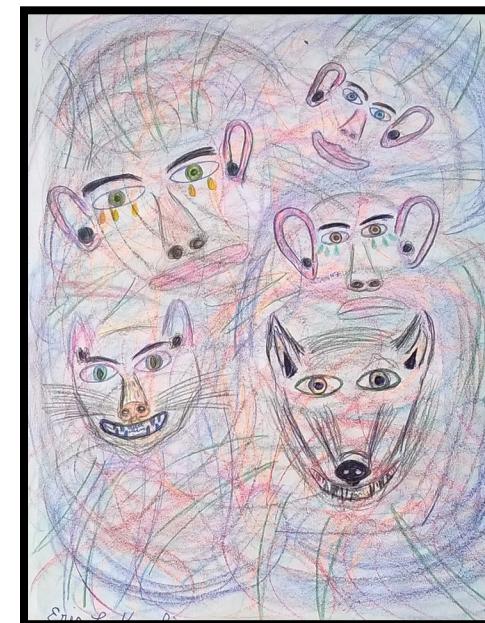
This entire colored pencil artwork best describes how in my early life as a child I had several troubles. In 1964, I had an incident that changed my life forever. I couldn't hear well, couldn't concentrate and had severe anxiety, stress disorder and was diagnosed with a mild form of dyslexia. I had trouble talking for about 10 years after. Eventually I began to emerge after I saw the light (as illustrated in picture). All the colors of the light represent some of my many talents that emerged as I grew up.

The current COVID-19 virus can be represented by the green (pestilence) going up the tree and mimicking the people with false plant-like eyes. Eventually the colors of light take over and the virus can't grow or proliferate due to the different forms of light which also represent the many types of people who are combating this virus (COVID-19) in 2020.



Perseverance, Strength, and Unity by Rose Marcum-Raugh, Curator, Art on a Journey/Gallery Studio

The way that my art helps me is by giving me a way to unwind, decompress, and express my political views in a creative way.



Utter Confusion of People and Animals by Eric L. Kopchia, Colored Pencils on Paper, ArtBreak

This picture represents, best, the current state of the world in which the virus (COVID-19) has turned our world from social progress to resolute disparity, confusion, death and economic uncertainty. The faces of people are distanced from each other and the chaos, sickness and death of people. The faces of animals (cat and wolf) represent the predatory nature of this virus. It preys on many unsuspecting elders and some young in our current global population.

This picture also helps represent my past three years, from April 2017 to May 2020. My father passed away in early March 2012; my mother passed in late

November 2014. My cats are also gone as a result of getting evicted from the house I grew up in from September 1965 to September 2017 (52 years). All my loved ones died and I had to go to the Ann Arbor area, Feb 4, 2019. I now have a place in Ypsilanti and I'm starting to begin to move art works and science research in several areas.



The Freedom of Movement in the Natural World by Eric L. Kopchia, Colored Pencils on Paper, ArtBreak

This picture describes my early childhood in 1963-64. I was in fear of many things and processes I did not understand, so I withdrew into far-away places to pick up rocks, fossils and find out about nature. This picture represents security to me. Can't get too close to some people so I had to withdraw into my private shell. Couldn't trust anyone except my father, mother and sister, Susan. In 1985, when I was discharged from Ford Motor, I went

out west to find out what I was missing. I traveled out to Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and Nevada to find out things about the natural world. I have progressed since then and have several degrees in General Business, Chemistry, Marketing and Nuclear Physics. I have much work to do in all these areas of intrigue. I also love to do artworks representing such astounding natural wonders I've seen in the USA, Canada and Mexico.



Untitled by Taylor Forrest, Chalk on Sidewalk, Fresh Start Clubhouse

I like to do gratitude reflection and journaling. Going outside and using chalk to express what I'm grateful for makes me feel youthful and happy.

Art has been critical for me during the coronavirus quarantine. This particular project requires putting on a creative hat, heading outside, and thinking of all I am grateful for. Not only do I satisfy my creative bug, I get out in the sun and can reflect on all that is good, even in these hard times.

A lighter look on life on the inside

WILLY WILL
Groundcover jail correspondant

Are you tired of being stuck at home during this un-festive coronavirus season? Reruns of passed sporting events and Gilligan’s Island getting old and got you bummed out? Torn between the choices of leaving your safe, self-imposed, government-approved, homemade jail cell and venturing out to score the latest copy of Groundcover News? (*We have actually eliminated this conundrum by publishing online.*) Hmmm?

Then this article may help to cheer you up a little by comparing that to a conventional form of incarceration, inside of the Escambia County Detention Center (aka Pensacola Jail). It is located in the most western reaches of the Florida panhandle, or as we refer to it, “the ass end of Alabama and Mississippi!”

Upon arrival you are subjected to an

electronic cavity search scanner to detect the presence of kiestered – I mean secreted – bodily contraband (balloons full of whatever). Isn’t Homeland Security technology a hoot? Next stop, the freezing cold holding cell to eat 2 condiment-free bologna sandwiches, one stale oatmeal cookie and, as one nurse informed us, a “poisonous, powdered beverage” which is not good for us to consume – Springhouse – the beverage company of choice for jails and prisons.

Rules in here really don’t make much sense and it’s become quite obvious that within the administration, one hand doesn’t know what the other hand is doing, most of the time. For instance, we’re not allowed to keep the small paper bags from when we came in and there is no waste basket in the two-man cells, so where do the empty potato chip bags, ramen noodle wrappers, used plastic spoons and all manner of random-ass sh*t go? Down

the toilet – where else? Doesn’t it get clogged, you ask? Nope! There’s one thing about this place that stands above all else: the flushing power of the toilets is so strong that it can suck down a t-shirt and a pair of socks and probably a pair of runner shower sandals, too. So, once a year the maintenance dudes have to turn off the water for four or five hours (without warning, of course, so you can’t fill a few cups to drink while they work), and unblock the main pipes.

The hot water boiler breaks down at minimum once a week so for days we have to take cold showers. There’s no hot coffee or ramen noodles and the food is already cold by the time it reaches the block. The air conditioning (remember, this is Florida) is so cold in winter and summer that we have to block the vents with wet toilet paper blobs or get sick and freeze with our single blanket and 2 sheets — no pillowcase because there is no pillow.

You can try to make one out of whatever is available but there is really nothing to work with.

Medical here is a joke. There is no dentist so if you have a tooth that needs to come out, you have to finance a trip to an outside dentist. No money, no services. Imagine living with a couple of rotten, jagged, enameled shards cutting into your cheek or extending below the gum line. There are people with MRSA infections, hepatitis, AIDS, dementia, lice, scabies (a nasty little parasite that burrows under your skin) and last but not least, there’s black mold in the showers.

That’s just a brief glimpse of how deep the rabbit hole goes. It’s not all bad, of course. I mean, we’re human and humans have been known to be resilient in the face of hardship and adversity. Let’s talk cuisine.

Trust me on this one, folks, you do

see **INSIDE** next page ➡

Transgender in prison — first-person accounts

AARON ST. GERMAIN
Prison correspondant

“On the elevation of woman the world’s redemption and salvation hinge. And not till woman bursts the bonds of her sexual slavery, to which she has ever been subjected, will the world obtain an inkling of what she really is and of her proper place in the economy of nature.” – Eliphaz Levi

Being transgender in prison can be a difficult, if not horrible, experience. Transgender inmates are often outcasts in the general population. Still, more and more people are coming out as transgender here. What follows are excerpts from interviews I did with three transgender women who are dear friends to me, Brandilyn, Lilly and Pree. This is a glimpse of who they are as people and their lives in prison.

Aaron: Hey, girls, would you like to tell the readers about yourselves?

Pree: I’m funny, fun, loving, vindictive :((LOL) and I have a nice, unique personality.

Brandilyn: I’m 34 and a father of one, small business owner, ordained minister, practicing Wiccan, and Tarot card reader; a lead guitarist, backup vocalist and tattoo artist. Doing 4-8 years for felonious assault.

Lilly: I’m goofy, outgoing, fun to be around, and I’m sometimes not working with a full deck of cards. I’m an

open Transgender and ready to mingle.

Aaron: How long have you been transgender?

Pree: 5 years.

Brandilyn: Secretly my whole life. Openly since 2015 and diagnosed in 2018.

Lilly: I’ve been this way since I came out of my momma, and FYI, she didn’t have to push very hard ... I came sashaying out saying, “Heyyy!”

Aaron: How do y’all feel about the progress Michigan has made to better accommodate transgender inmates?

Brandilyn: It’s good that the state and overall country are taking gender dysphoria seriously as a mental health issue, not some want or perverse sexual gratification. I’m happy being treated with respect with proper housing, showers and surgical procedures, and the “need” not “want” for feminine clothing and make-up are medical details that allow us these things. They help us be who we truly are.

Lilly: They’re doing a shitty job with putting us on the correct dosage of hormones.

Aaron: What would you like to see improved?

Pree: Faster progress.

Brandilyn: We need more state workers trained to work with Transgenders as far as referring to us by the proper pronouns (she/her) and how to properly shake us down.

Lilly: New staff and doctors who know what they are doing. They need to open a unit for LGBTQI inmates and allow consensual sex. We are adults!

Aaron: I don’t want to be insensitive but can you tell readers some of the bad things that have happened to you in prison for being transgender?

Pree: I was assaulted in May of 2019 by a corrections officer because of who I am. I’m going to court to press charges and file a civil suit against that officer. Hate does exist!

Brandilyn: I’ve been housed with known predators and men can be very aggressive in their approach to women. Staff have called me a dick-sucking fag and have tried to get me assaulted through third-party means. But some staff have been very supportive of being LGBTQI.

Lilly: They single us out, destroy our property, slander our names! They say we are going to hell and that we amount to nothing. We are a menace to society and an abomination.

Aaron: What are some of the good things that have happened since being in prison?

Pree: I started hormones and it makes me feel more like a woman.

Brandilyn: Since the state started recognizing us, I’ve been housed accordingly with other Transgenders instead of with gangbangers and predators.

Lilly: I’ve met some really cool

people, good friends who are going through some of the same issues as me!

Aaron: How do you feel the community can help, not only with LGBTQI in prison, but also on the outside?

Brandilyn: Vote on proposals that help us.

Lilly: Bringing in more staff and doctors who know what they are doing.

Aaron: Thank you for your time – do you have anything you’d like to add? Any words of wisdom for possible LGBTQI people out there reading this?

Brandilyn: Don’t be afraid to love yourself and be true to you. There are a lot of people like you and there are communities that will accept you – just reach out and we will reach back with a hug. Stay up, be true, be you.

Lilly: This is to all my girls and boys, “Stay strong sistas and brothas – we’re all in this together. It’s hard but it gets easier. Be yourself and don’t let anyone else tell you who to be. As long as you’re happy with yourself, that’s all that matters and counts. Love you all!”

Aaron: Being LGBTQI in prison is a unique experience. We struggle but we survive. Please know we are people, too, and only wish to be seen and accepted as such and judged by what we do, not by who we love. Thank you for reading this!

Sudoku

★★★★☆☆4puz.com

1				5	7	3		
			8			1		6
8							4	
2	3							1
7	4	8				9	2	3
9							5	8
		2						5
3		4			9			
		9	6	7				4

Fill in the squares so that each row, column, and 3-by-3 box contain the numbers 1 through 9.

➡ **INSIDE** from previous page

not want to sample our “Bill of Fare.” It’s usually mushy and soft since most inmates only have a few teeth left to eat with. There’s no real meat – only a soy substitute. It comes to the kitchen in 50-pound bags. I don’t know exactly where it comes from but small print on the bag states, “Not meant for human consumption.” Over time it gives you man-boobs.

To give you an idea how bad it is here, about twice a week when they are waiting for a new shipment of grub to arrive and running low on food, our menu contains “Mussco.” Wondering what muscco is? That’s where all the leftover stuff in the refrigerator “must-go” – old potatoes, beans, bread, soy, etc. Keefe has taken over our Commissary canteen and they are killing us with their prices. We can only get coffee by the single serve Taster’s Choice stick at 50 cents apiece, which is the equivalent of \$70 for a pound’s worth of coffee.

On a lighter note, as I mentioned, necessity is the mother of invention and where there’s a Willy Will, there’s a way! There’s no smoking anymore. Still, some people get the equivalent of weed in by having their incoming letter soaked in THC oil and letting it dry before mailing it. The recipient shreds the letter and rolls it up in the thin wrapping paper that toilet paper comes in (which is getting hard to get these days because the officers are onto that now and take off the covering before giving us the toilet paper). Sometimes the trustees can sneak some in. We make a paste out of instant coffee, paint it on the toilet paper

wrapper and let it dry. This colors it brown like a blunt, makes it burn slower and taste a little better.

To avoid the smell of smoke alerting the guards, we prepare the cell. We take a cup and bail all the water out of the toilet which then creates a small suction of airflow into the hole of the commode. Then we soak a rag in Bengay muscle rub and wipe the walls down when we finish smoking. That strong mint menthol can cover up the smell of just about anything. Burnt popcorn is even better, but that’s a story from another jail. There aren’t any microwaves or hot pots down here because some fools cook up some boiling hot concoctions (vaseline, lotion and sugar, so it sticks) and put it on somebody. So we’re not allowed to have any. Inmates ruin everything!

To light the blunt, put two thin pieces of broken razor blade near each other on a metal table and connect the terminals of two AA batteries with the blade tips overlapping slightly, then wait until it sparks and glows red. We make a wick out of a piece of toilet paper with Bob Barker institutional soap rubbed lightly on it, twisted to a sharp point. We touch the wick to the sparking blade and bingo, el fumar! (The soap makes it catch quicker and burn longer and for some reason, Irish Spring doesn’t work.)

Finally, we sit around the toilet and blow smoke down the hole, then wipe the walls with the Bengay-laced rag, and “bust up” out of the cell because if they smell it when they make rounds and you are there, you’re going to “the hole,” or as the administrators affectionately call it, “Disciplinary Housing.”

For our next caper, we make “the

ACROSS

- "Ba-da-__!"
- Dry with a twist
- Triangle sound
- Aha moment blossom
- Hey alternative
- Plains tribe
- Bounty-ous booze
- Gave a lube job
- __ Farm (clothing brand)
- Classic doorbell sound
- Jessica Parker and Michelle Gellar, for two
- Ruby Dee's husband
- __ Davis
- Daybreak deity
- Lass counterpart
- Headed for the hills
- Party of five
- Illegal business bloc that blocks competitors
- Unsound ape of monster film
- "Always Be My Maybe" actress Wong
- Aroma
- Avril Lavigne song "Sk8er __"
- Table tennis sound, aptly
- Per se, after "in"
- It connects the blade with the stem
- "Party of Five" actress Campbell
- Autograph
- RZA's memoir "The __ of Wu"
- __ New Guinea
- "Duotones" saxophonist
- Litling in sound
- Fourth qtr. start
- Sweet start?
- Et
- Exhausted way to be spread
- Burr of "Hamilton"
- Source of a great roar
- Head shop purchase
- Mistaken
- Half a barbecue tool?

DOWN

- Significant soiree or hairstyle
- Actor Elba of "Luther"
- Vintage Vegas signs
- Silly Secret Santa purchase, maybe
- "__ boy!" (excited cry)
- Checked, with "in"
- "Send me"
- Mets' div.
- Deities
- Admiral, in the navy
- "This was inevitable"
- Biblical patriarch after the flood
- Acquires
- "Out," to an editor
- HBO persona created by Sacha Baron Cohen
- Area meas.
- It beats down on Oaxaca
- Loosen, as laces
- Carbon compound

33. End-of-the-week initialism

34. "Andy __"

35. "... cannot tell __"

36. Movie star of the 1920s

37. Bar barrel

40. Tech's choice in review sites

43. Separating, as cotton fiber from its seeds

44. Dawdling

46. Many a sitcom rating

47. Flavoring from the deep

49. Like some shirts

52. "The Jetsons" pooch

54. Salk's conquest

55. "Local" group

56. Inevitable process over time

57. Hoda of "Today"

58. Resonant sound

59. Use your teeth, say

61. Da __, Vietnam

64. '50s Mideast alliance

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Bethlehem Church is home of the Groundcover office



JULY 2020 EVENTS AT BETHLEHEM

Bethlehem has cancelled all in-person activities due to COVID-19. Here are ways you can experience our 10 am worship service on Sundays:

Most Simple - Tune in to our live radio broadcast on WAAM 1600AM. You can also listen to WAAM on Tune In by following this link : <http://www.mainstreamnetwork.com/listen/player.asp?station=waam-am&listen=Listen+Live>. (Click the shiny "play" button on the lower left of the page, ignoring any advertisements.)

· Facebook

Beginning at 9:55 Sunday, you will find our Live Video at Bethlehem's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/bethlehemucca2>

· Following the service

As always, you can listen to the podcast of our service following worship at the Bethlehem website. <https://bethlehem-ucc.org/> (direct link: <http://bethlehemucc.podhoster.com/>)

Thank you all. We look forward to worshipping together.



Sunday Worship Times

10:00 am Sanctuary
streamed on Facebook

11:15 am Virtual Connect
w/ Ms. Kelsey and Pastor Lily via ZOOM

Hooch.” There’s lots of ways to do it, depending on the amount of sugar and the availability of ingredients, which around here is PDS (pretty damn slim). The deputies are hip to that, too, and have cut back on real sugar and fresh fruit. Does this stop us? Hell, no! Like Ford, we’ve got a better idea, though it sometimes takes weeks to gather all the supplies. We take the apple sauce from the diet trays for fruit, butterscotch candies and Jolly Ranchers (watermelon tastes best) for the sugar and a gallon or two of water and put it all in a large plastic trash bag which we hide for four or five days. Then it’s party time!



Thousands of protestors gathered and marched demanding justice in downtown Ann Arbor after the murder of George Floyd. Photo credit: Evan Parness.

George Floyd’s horrific death and police brutality: demands for racial equality and justice

“The [killing] of George Floyd ignited the protest, but the underlying issues are longstanding. When we talk about remedies, we really have to go back and look at this problem holistically, historically, and at the roots. It is a structural issue: Hundreds of years of racist policies—economic, housing, criminal, education, etc.” — Mehrsa Baradaran, Law Professor at The University of California at Irvine



WILL SHAKESPEARE
Groundcover vendor No. 258

Monday, May 25th, 2020 was a Memorial Day that sparked a revolution. Around 8:00 p.m. in Minneapolis, George Floyd, 46, died in a police encounter. Video captured by bystanders shows Floyd on the ground with a police officer pressing a knee against his neck. Floyd shouts “I can’t breathe” and “Don’t kill me.”

Some eyewitnesses and observers later said that at one point while he was suffocating, George Floyd cried out for his mother to come and save him. It was a horrific and shocking killing.

The video and headline news about George Floyd’s murder went viral. On Tuesday, protests and riots broke out in Minneapolis and several cities. Some of the protest marches were peaceful. Others turned into riots, with angry demonstrators setting fire to police vehicles and eventually the police station where Floyd’s arresting police officers had been assigned. There were subsequent protests in many cities and suburbs all over America. It was clearly a wake-up call for many white Americans.

Minneapolis Fox news reported that the police fired rubber bullets, tear gas, and stun grenades at some protesters.

While the protest had started peacefully, it deteriorated and some demonstrators were seen breaking windows of police cars and hurling rocks.

Where did Floyd’s appalling death begin? The Minneapolis police officers responded to a call from a grocer who said that George Floyd used a \$20 forged check for his grocery purchase at the store. In his emotional testimony before the U.S. House Judiciary Committee on Wednesday, June 10th, George Floyd’s brother Philones said that it was so sad to believe a Black man’s life is worth \$20 in the Year 2020. He proclaimed that no one’s life should be cheapened and nullified. He also said, “Enough is enough!” and implored Congress to make a change so his brother had not died in vain.

At George Floyd’s funeral, Reverend Al Sharpton spoke about the series of black lives that were snuffed away in recent years. He mentioned Trayvon Martin of Florida, Mike Brown of Ferguson, Missouri, Eric Garner of New York City, Ahmaud Arbery of Georgia, Breonna Taylor of Louisville, Kentucky, and now George Floyd of Minnesota. Reverend Al Green helped to conclude the funeral, saying, “Go on and get your

rest George. Go on and get your rest! We will continue the fight!! We will continue to fight for you!!!!”

On the day of Floyd’s funeral, NPR reported that bail was set at one million dollars for Derek Chauvin, the Minneapolis police officer who pressed his knee on Floyd’s neck until he died.

A multi-racial protest for equality, civil rights, peace, and justice

The video of George Floyd begging the compassionless arresting police officers for his life sent chills down the backs of most people in the United States and around the world. The tragedy triggered a nerve in America’s conscience. It aroused the empathy and sympathy of most Americans. Many protesters said that the video evidence was both compelling and frightening. For some, the video felt personal, as though it could have been a family member, a friend or even themselves.

The marches, the rallies and the protests have been increasingly multi-racial and multicultural, with multitudes carrying BLACK LIVES MATTER banners and chanting “Enough is Enough,” “No Justice No Peace,” and “Black Lives Matter.” They are demonstrating for racial justice, racial equality, and measures to end systemic racism and address centuries of racial discrimination. The protesters have called for police reform, transparency and accountability.

The protests in Detroit attracted thousands of people from southeastern Michigan. Although Detroit’s population is about 80% Black, the protest

marches have been a sea of multiracial and multi-ethnic groups. Some of the older Detroit folks have been surprised by the huge outpouring of sympathy and support, and younger folks have welcomed the mostly white young adults and teenagers from the surrounding suburbs.

Every day from May 28 to present, hundreds of the protestors gathered at 1301 Third St at 4pm for The People’s March. This protest was coordinated by citizens organized together under the name Detroit Will Breathe. Every day the protest began with community members speaking-out or teaching-in about racism and anti-blackness in the United States. On June 20, Detroit Will Breathe held a public tribunal to judge the mayor and police chief, condemning them for arrests and a violent response to the peaceful marches.

In the Ann Arbor area, thousands joined the protest marches. There were protests in the city of Ann Arbor every day for several days. There were also protests in Ypsilanti, Dexter, Saline, and some smaller townships. Ann Arbor News/M-Live reporters interviewed several protesters on the streets and sidelines. Jennifer Cobbina, a Michigan State Criminologist, said, “People are understanding the role of racism. They’re understanding that racism is real and there is white privilege. People are having their eyes opened and they are willing to learn more about these issues for a change.”

Over the spell of five and a half decades, America has gone through some painful rallies, marches,

see **PROTEST** next page ➡

Don’t wait to say my name

J. E. BRENNAN
Groundcover contributor

Don’t wait to say my name
Don’t wait until my life is gone to tell your children, “Black Lives Matter”
Don’t wait to say my name
Don’t wait to throw your hands up in protest
Until mine have fallen bloody to the ground
Don’t you wait to say my name
It’s not just yesterday’s children that we fight to remember
Not just the ones aligned to be buried
But the mother afraid to send her children to school
The wife, her husband to work
Don’t wait to say my name
I stand before you asking for no more than recognition
Asking for respect
Asking for life
Don’t wait to say my name
Don’t pass me on the street and bow your head with implicit biases
Allow the thought to pass through your mind that you know me somehow better
than I know myself
Don’t you wait to say my name
I am here
I can hear
I can see
And I can thrive
I am alive
And you don’t get to wait until I die to recognize
Your hands around my throat
Your poison in my veins
The blades of your hate in my heart
Let me live, hear my cries and
Don’t wait to say my name

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

1	9	6	4	5	7	3	8	2
4	5	2	8	9	3	1	7	6
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Somebody’s Up There

CHRIS ELLIS
Groundcover vendor No. 483

These pants are hanging on
those trees, these
necks are turned
so ungodly.

These souls are whispering
linger
linger
linger

In those branches, curling
around, down,
peering into those
calmed faces

Dripping someone’s horrible
sin
sin
sins

Sunday morning is
mourning, mourning
mourning to the sky, and
lower down to those
swaying groundless shoes.

Some polished, some mud caked,
worn, some inches
from the ground, others
high above,

As some soaring tragic angel, serenely
gone to heaven, leaving
a stilled
living
corpse.

➡ **PROTEST** from previous page

fallen asleep in the drive-through lane of a Wendy’s restaurant.

demonstrations and protests. The modern Civil Rights Movement, led by Rev./Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks and others, gained traction as TV brought the violent physical abuse suffered by Black protesters at the hands of Sheriffs and other police officers to American living rooms. It awoke the viewers’ spiritual sense of fairness, empathy, and humanity.

The 1967 Detroit Riots were ignited by police brutality. In 1991, the nation witnessed a bystander’s footage of police beating Mr. Rodney King, an African American, in Los Angeles. The acquittal of the four police officers involved sparked massive riots across Los Angeles, and King’s story has been integral to the fight against police brutality.

In the weeks after the awful death of George Floyd, there was another police-related killing of a Black man in Atlanta who had

Solutions

For the short-term, governments at all levels should listen to the voices of protesters and the concerns expressed by the Black Lives Matter movement. State and local governments should ban dangerous police practices that kill people. Police oversight, reform and accountability are needed. The federal government should work to pass serious police reform and reorganization legislation, introduced as the “George Floyd’s Justice in Policing Act of 2020.”

For the long-term, reparations must be considered. In her 2017 book “The Color of Money,” UC Irvine Law Professor Mehrsa Baradaran wrote that the 14th Amendment “promised an elusive equal protection and equal rights.” Think!

Pasta Primavera

ELIZABETH BAUMAN
Groundcover contributor

12 ounces egg pasta (I like Al Dente, locally made!) cooked in salted water, and drained
3 tablespoons olive oil
3 cloves minced garlic
2 cups sliced zucchini
2 cups sliced mushrooms
1 sweet pepper, diced
1 cup half and half
2/3 cup grated parmesan
Salt and pepper

Sauté vegetables in a large skillet with olive oil over medium-high heat. When vegetables are cooked, add half and half and simmer for 2 minutes. Add cooked pasta to skillet along with cheese and a dash or two of salt and pepper.

Experiment with vegetables. There are some many different variations to try with this recipe! Makes 4-5 servings.

Groundcover Vendor Code during COVID-19

While Groundcover is a non-profit, and paper vendors are self-employed contractors, we still have expectations of how vendors should conduct themselves while selling and representing the paper. COVID-19 specific requirements agreed to by vendors following new training.

- I will wear a mask at all times while selling Groundcover News.
- I will use gloves, hand sanitizer or wash with soap to remove germs from my hands before selling and as needed.
- I will stay 6 feet away from others.

The following is our Vendor Code of Conduct, which every vendor reads and signs before receiving a badge and papers. We request that if you discover a vendor violating any tenets of the Code, please contact us and provide as many details as possible. Our paper and our vendors should be positively impacting our County.

- Groundcover will be distributed for a voluntary donation. I agree not to ask for more than the cover price or solicit donations by any other means.
- I will only sell current issues of Groundcover.
- I agree not to sell additional goods or products when selling the paper or to panhandle, including panhandling with only one paper.
- I will wear and display my badge when selling papers and refrain from wearing it or other Groundcover gear when engaged in other activities.
- I will only purchase the paper from Groundcover Staff and will not sell to or buy papers from other Groundcover vendors, especially vendors who have been suspended or terminated.
- I agree to treat all customers, staff, and other vendors respectfully. I will not "hard sell," threaten, harass or pressure customers, staff, or other vendors verbally or physically.
- I will not sell Groundcover under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- I understand that I am not a legal employee of Groundcover but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and income.
- I understand that my badge is property of Groundcover and will not deface it. I will present my badge when purchasing the papers.
- I agree to stay off private property when selling Groundcover.
- I understand to refrain from selling on public buses, federal property or stores unless there is permission from the owner.
- I agree to stay at least one block away from another vendor in downtown areas. I will also abide by the Vendor corner policy.
- I understand that Groundcover strives to be a paper that covers topics of homelessness and poverty while providing sources of income for the homeless. I will try to help in this effort and spread the word.



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English: stfrancisa2.com/mass

Regular Mass Times
Mon-Thurs 9:15am

Fri 8:15am

Sat 5pm
7pm (Spanish)

Sun 10:30am

During the LiveStream mass, make a spiritual communion by praying this or a similar prayer:

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unit myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.



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